



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

**Northern California Health Care System
150 Muir Road, Martinez, CA 94553**

News Release

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VA TO DEDICATE NEW MEDICAL CENTER TOWER

(SACRAMENTO, Calif.) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Northern California Health Care System will hold a ceremony on Thursday, October 30, to celebrate the opening of its new 55-bed inpatient tower at the Sacramento VA Medical Center at Mather, Calif.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony J. Principi will give the keynote address at the dedication and key passing ceremony, which is scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m.

The new five-story, \$39.5 million, state-of-the-art inpatient facility, located at the former Mather Air Force Base in Sacramento, includes an increased number of medical-surgical and intensive care unit beds, additional monitored, or "step-down" beds and operating rooms. The new tower, which opened in June, also has a new cardiac catheterization lab and gastroenterology/endoscopy suite, angiography capability and 16,000 square feet of research laboratory, demonstrating VA's substantial commitment to basic science and clinical research. This vast research laboratory will significantly enhance VA's efforts to find causes, and develop treatments and cures, for various diseases that affect our nation's veterans.

"This new facility has allowed us to significantly enhance clinical services available to veterans in northern California," says Brian O'Neill, M.D., chief of staff for the VA Northern California Health Care System, which operates the medical center, "we are excited and energized at the possibilities for growth that lie ahead, and we have already begun to add many new programs including interventional radiology, cardiac catheterization and expanded vascular and urology services."

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The Sacramento VA Medical Center offers a full range of comprehensive primary, medical, surgical and subspecialty services to veterans in northern California as well as wide range of diagnostic services, including mammography, MRI, CT and PET scanning. The medical center also operates a 24-hour urgent care center. Since opening its doors in 1999, the medical center has experienced dramatic growth, with the number of patients treated having grown from 14,878 in FY 2000 to over 26,000 in FY 2003. The medical center is part of the VA Northern California Health Care System, a regional health care system that provides care to a geographic region that includes over 400,000 veterans. In fiscal year 2002, the health system provided care to nearly 70,000 veterans in northern California.

In addition, the new tower houses a nine-bed General Clinical Research Center (GCRC) that will be jointly operated by VA and the University of California, Davis (UCD). "The GCRC will provide unique opportunities for VA and UCD researchers and clinicians to conduct cutting-edge clinical research right here in Sacramento," says Lars Berglund, M.D., VA staff physician, director of the GCRC, and professor in the UCD Division of Endocrinology, Clinical Nutrition and Vascular Medicine. "This is an extremely positive development in the already successful affiliation between VA and UCD" Berglund continued, "and the commitment from both organizations illustrates a true partnership that presents extraordinary possibilities in the area of clinical research."

The dedication ceremony will be held at the Sacramento VAMC, 10535 Hospital Way, Mather, Calif. Invited guests include congressional, senatorial, federal, state, city and county officials, veterans organizations and community leaders from the greater Sacramento area. The event is open to the public.

Shuttle service will be provided from the Sacramento Light Rail Mather Field/Mills Station every fifteen minutes beginning at 8:45 a.m., with the last shuttle departing the station at 9:45 a.m. Shuttle service will resume from the Sacramento VAMC at 11:15 a.m., with the last shuttle departing the medical center at 12:15 p.m.

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